

April 4, 2006

Press Release | Contact: Danielle Langone (202) 225-6416

WASHINGTON, DC—U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Springfield) and 13 other west coast members today asked the Department of Commerce to immediately declare this year's West Coast salmon fishery a disaster if a closure of the fishery is approved by the Pacific Fishery Management Council. DeFazio was joined by members who represent the 700 miles of coastal Oregon and California affected by the potential season closure. Immediate declaration of a fishery disaster will speed the delivery of a relief package to those affected. The PFMC is expected to make a decision by April 7, 2006.

The text of the letter is attached below:



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Dr. William T. Hogarth
Director, NOAA Fisheries
U.S. Department of Commerce
Room SSMC 3
14th Street and Constitution Avenue NW
Washington DC 20230

Dear Dr. Hogarth:

Thank you for granting our request to provide us with a congressional briefing on the impending salmon disaster. As you know, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) may soon approve a complete federal closure of the salmon fishery between Cape Falcon in Northern Oregon and Point Sur in Central California. A closure of this nature, covering 700 miles of coastline, would be unprecedented and will levy a devastating economic toll on our fishing communities. We cannot wait for the Department of Commerce to complete a comprehensive economic analysis of the closure. We ask that upon a Council announcement of a closure that you immediately declare a fishery disaster.

Due to the realities of the congressional schedule we will have to move a relief package as quickly as possible. Our task will be made significantly more difficult without a disaster declaration and direct economic impact estimate from your agency. We ask that you make your determination in two parts.

First, you should immediately declare the salmon fishery a disaster and provide us with an initial estimate of the direct compensation costs to fishers and deckhands. In addition we ask that you provide us with a list of immediate in-stream mitigation measures that may be adopted. This will allow us to begin moving a minimum relief and mitigation package through Congress.

You should then begin analysis of community economic impacts associated with peripheral industries such as retail and lodging. These peripheral industries are vital to the economic and social health of our coastal communities and should not be ignored. However, we recognize that quantifying these impacts will require more time and analysis by your agency.

As part of this second analysis, we ask that you include recommendations for significant long-term changes in the management of the Klamath River system-including the Shasta, Trinity, Scott, and Salmon rivers-so we may begin to address the underlying causes of this fishery disaster. We ask that this second analysis be completed expeditiously, but do not want the time needed to complete this work to delay a disaster declaration.

Please be prepared, upon a decision by the Council, to immediately declare a disaster and provide us with an estimate of direct economic costs. We appreciate your consideration of this request. Do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions about this request.

Sincerely,

/s/

Peter DeFazio
Mike Thompson
Nancy Pelosi
George Miller
Earl Blumenauer
Lois Capps
David Wu
Tom Lantos
Darlene Hooley
Doris Matsui
Maxine Waters
Sam Farr

Mike Honda
Anna Eshoo